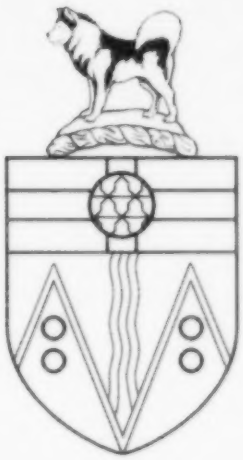

Budget Address
2008 - 2009

presented by

Premier

Dennis Fentie

First session of the Thirty-Second
Yukon Legislative Assembly

Whitehorse, Yukon
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, today it gives me great pleasure to table the 2008-2009 Budget, the second budget of our second mandate.

The Government of Yukon's Capital and Operations and Maintenance Budget for 2008-2009 is $899.7 million.

The Operation and Maintenance Budget totals $697 million of which $61 million is recoverable.

The Capital Budget totals $202.7 million of which $81.7 million is recoverable.

On October 10, 2006, we presented Yukoners with a renewed vision for the territory in our election platform, entitled "Building Yukon's Future Together – A Clear Vision for a Bright Future." Our government's vision is based on four major pillars:

- achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners;
- protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife while studying, mitigating and adapting to climate change;
- promoting a strong, diversified private-sector economy; and
- practicing good, cooperative governance with strong fiscal management.

This budget, like its predecessor, is enabling our government to implement our election commitments to Yukoners. There is an old adage that actions speak louder than words. The 2008-2009 Budget is giving action to our words.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that progress is being made on all fronts as we go about the hard work of turning our vision into reality.

I. ACHIEVING A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YUKONERS

Achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners involves improving the health, safety and socio-economic well being of Yukon families and their communities.

A majority of Yukon government departments and agencies are dedicated to meeting the challenges presented by this major pillar in our election platform.

Our government is committed to providing Yukoners with the knowledge, skills, opportunities and ability to participate fully in their work and their communities and to promote a love of lifelong learning.

The Department of Education has numerous programs and initiatives contained in the 2008-2009 Budget that are meeting these challenges head on.

The Education Reform Report, a major collaborative initiative with Yukon First Nations, was released on February 8, 2008. The Department of Education will be working in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and other partners in education in the development of a multi-year implementation strategy, entitled "New Horizons: Honouring our Commitment to the Future." This strategy will build on our strengths as we continue to improve the education system for all students.

Building on the Government's commitment to develop more meaningful partnerships, the Department of Education is developing a stakeholder infrastructure committee to ensure community partners have input into such important initiatives as:

- the School Growth Planning Process which fosters local input into school planning;
- the Secondary Program Review process which will make recommendations regarding the future facilities development of F.H. Collins; and
- a leadership program development initiative and the First Nations Education Advisory Committee that is open to participation from all First Nation governments.

The Special Program Unit within the Department of Education has produced a new publication for use in schools. The title is "Making a Difference – Working with Students who have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders." The core of the manual is twelve essential elements for dealing with students affected by FASD. The manual addresses FASD and provides practical strategies for helping young people both in the classroom and in the community.

Another successful project is the Whole Child Program. It is a great example of how a school community can work together to build an exceptional environment for children. The program includes two schools and their students and families – Whitehorse Elementary and Elijah Smith Elementary.

Literacy, of course, is of fundamental importance to learning and the Department of Education has a number of initiatives in this regard.

The Wilson Reading Program and Training system specifically addresses the learning style of students with a language-based disability and builds on the very successful outcomes of the Reading Recovery Program from earlier years. The Wilson Reading certification program includes course work, as well as supervised work with students. A certified Wilson trainer observes lessons and provides feedback to teachers.

The Department of Education held a free literacy camp last summer as a pilot project for twenty grade two and three students attending Selkirk Elementary School, Grey Mountain Primary School and Christ the King Elementary School. Activities included reading, art, music and physical education. The plan is to extend this opportunity to more children in future years.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Libraries Branch of Community Services is also implementing a number of initiatives to improve its services to promote literacy in Yukon.

The Public Libraries Branch partners with the Yukon Literacy Coalition to provide books to young children in rural Yukon for their first five years and promotes literacy and early reading skills with funding from local partners and the Dolly Parton Foundation.

In another partnership with the Yukon Literacy Coalition, Public Libraries promotes family literacy and reading throughout Yukon communities.

It also engages in a multi-partner initiative each May that offers a week-long Yukon Writers Festival promoting Canadian literature and literacy with author readings throughout the Yukon and special events in Whitehorse.

The Whitehorse Public Library has expanded its service to include separate programs for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers in order to promote pre-literacy and social skills, setting the environment for life-long reading enjoyment. The Public Libraries Branch is introducing an electronic database subscriptions program that will enhance library resources by providing public access to subscription databases including information on automobile repair, encyclopedias and reference sources, history, book reviews and homework support for students.

Yukon libraries have something for everyone, young and old and all ages in between.

The First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit of the Department of Education's Public Schools Branch, in conjunction with First Nations, has expanded the First Nations curriculum resources with the completion of four new titles in the North Wind book series and three more are in production. Four grade five Yukon First Nations modules have been developed in languages, moieties, citizenship and traditional ways of governance. These modules give students an understanding of Yukon First Nation governance in a pre-contact setting and are currently being piloted in eight different schools. All four First Nation modules will be implemented in every Yukon grade five classroom during the 2008/09 school year. BC's First People's 12 course will also be offered in Yukon High Schools during the 2008/09 school year. This is an equivalent course to English 12 and focuses on aboriginal literature.

In keeping with Yukon's cultural diversity, the Ecole Emilie-Tremblay School has introduced a new experiential learning program for high school grades that allows young francophone Yukoners to become engaged and feel a sense of belonging while remaining true to their heritage.

Information technology continues to play an ever important role in lifelong learning. A new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) curriculum was launched for Yukon students in grades eight to ten. The curriculum will help ensure that students at the secondary level have a common learning experience with ICT, including information on the proper and ethical use of ICT and media awareness resources focusing on online safety and cyber bullying. Video conferencing services have also been expanded to classrooms across the territory in the areas of program delivery, shared classes between rural and urban schools and professional development opportunities and meetings.

As part of its commitment to life-long learning, the Department of Education is providing $104,000 in this budget to index the Student Financial Assistance Grant. In 2007-2008, 1,066 students received the grant to further their education in one hundred and forty-four post secondary institutions throughout North America.

"Educating today for jobs tomorrow" is another important election platform commitment that our government is addressing. Today in Yukon, there is an increasingly critical demand for both skilled and entry level workers.

Our government is undertaking a number of initiatives to address this serious labour force shortage. To this end, the Department of Education is taking the lead role in an Interdepartmental Steering Committee to oversee the development of a Labour Market Framework to address labour market shortages over the next ten years.

The Labour Market Framework will be based on four pillars:

(1) national and international recruitment to attract more workers to live in the Yukon;

(2) retention initiatives to make Yukon an attractive and welcoming place to live and work;

(3) training and development to promote life-long learning, foster partnerships and expand training and employment opportunities; and

(4) collection of relevant labour market information that will assist public policy, education training, business planning and personal career decision making.

Once the framework has been developed, we will consult with our stakeholders and Yukoners to ensure that we have a Yukon-made labour market strategy.

Further, Education has made three major changes to the Student Training Employment Program (STEP) that will benefit students and potentially help in easing our labour market shortages.

Firstly, the wage rates have been increased to $14.40 per hour for first year students, $15.27 per hour for second year students and $16.20 per hour for third year students.

Secondly, the program has been expanded to include fourth year and/or graduating students, with a wage rate of $17.19 per hour. If students know that they may access STEP after graduation, it should help attract more of them back to Yukon where subsequent careers may be established.

Thirdly, STEP has been expanded to allow for up to sixteen weeks of support, up from the previous twelve weeks. This last measure will provide students with an opportunity to earn more over the summer and better offset their post-secondary costs.

Our government is encouraging Yukoners of all ages to participate in the labour force to meet the high demand for workers at all levels. One such program is the Targeted Older Worker Initiative.

Projects are being designed to improve the employability of participants from 55 to 64 years of age, and may assist them through activities such as prior learning assessment, skills upgrading, and experience in new fields of work.

Three communities will begin an intake in April 2008.

In November 2007, our government announced that it intended to add a Critical Impact Worker category to the Yukon Nominee Program as a means of assisting local businesses in addressing the labour market shortages.

The program is intended to fast track immigrants once they have a job offer from an employer. The program has received much attention from the business community and, to date, well over one hundred applications have been received.

At the same time, the Department of Education is currently developing a Yukon Immigration Portal. The website will provide information for people who want to immigrate to Yukon or learn more about the territory. It also provides information about the immigration process, as well as the Yukon Nominee Program itself. The English version will be launched on April 1, 2008 to be followed by the French version.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon College is also playing a key role in addressing the territory's skilled labour shortage. The College will deliver a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Program brokered through Bow Valley College.

The program includes curricula, curriculum support and instructor orientation. There will be two, 2-year intakes of twelve students with the first intake beginning in September 2008. Currently, there is a great need for LPN's in Yukon.

Funding of $368,457 operation and maintenance and $186,780 capital is being provided to implement this important initiative.

Yukon College is heavily involved in trades training. One such program involves renovating a lab-classroom facility at the College and purchasing up-to-date tools and equipment to deliver a six month pre-employment course in the heating trades to supply new entry level trades workers to Yukon employers.

This facility will then be used to provide a Housing Maintenance Program, as well as future heating pre-employment programs.

$300,000 in Capital funding is being provided to implement this program.

Yukon College is also building upon previous trades program revitalization projects funded from the Post-Secondary Infrastructure Trust.

Capital funding of $117,400 is being provided for:

(1) the expansion of the multi-use building at Yukon College to provide a permanent space for the pipe trades;

(2) improving connectivity in the trades classrooms and shops at Ayamdigut Campus;

(3) upgrading and retrofitting the trades and mobile trailers; and

(4) acquisition of traveling toolkits for off-site course delivery.

Mr. Speaker, all of these education and training initiatives will help provide Yukoners with a better quality of life. One of the best social programs in the world is still a good job.

Mr. Speaker, as the Yukon economy continues to prosper and our population continues to grow and age, there is an ever increasing pressure on our health care system and social safety net.

The Department of Health and Social Services is working hard to deal with these pressures.

Mr. Speaker, an additional $1.948 million is being provided in 2008-2009 under the Territorial Health Access Fund (THAF) to support numerous initiatives aimed at reducing reliance on the health care system, strengthening community level access to services and building self reliant capacity to deliver services in the territory.

This year's increase will bring total THAF funding to approximately $6.670 million supporting over twelve projects including:

- advancing the health human resource strategy;
- improving emergency planning and risk management;
- implementing a Nurse Information Line service;
- enhanced dental health services in communities;
- improving supports to community mental health;
- early identification of mental health concerns;
- improved supports to increase tuberculosis patient outcomes;
- implementation of Advance Directives;
- expanded telehealth services;
- development of a palliative care program;
- increased health promotion activities related to reduction of tobacco use;

- new health promotion initiatives related to injury prevention, healthy living nutrition; and
- advancing policy work on health information, privacy and electronic records issues.

Mr. Speaker, the THAF is the result of our government working with our two sister territories in 2004 in a pan-northern approach to successfully negotiate a $150 million fund over five years for the three territories to support health reform, help improve access to services and support the high cost of medical travel in the north.

The Department of Health and Social Services is introducing a new initiative in the 2008-2009 Budget entitled Family Support Services to Children with Disabilities. New programming will coordinate, expand and enhance services such as therapies and other services to ensure that children with disabilities fulfill their potential.

The Yukon program is built on best practices from across the country. It will provide coordinated access to services and early interventions, support for integration into community life, expanded behavioral therapies and increased staff and professional training. Most importantly, this program will help parents take care of their children and involve them in choosing the therapies and support that best meet their childs' needs. Mr. Speaker $418,000 is being provided to implement this new initiative.

Our government is continuing to address the need for care facilities in both Whitehorse and rural Yukon. The 2008-2009 Budget is providing $1.474 million for Copper Ridge Place.

Mr. Speaker, $6.95 million is being made available for the Watson Lake Health Centre.

The Department of Health and Social Services is working hard to both attract and train health care professionals. The number of Yukon general practitioners has increased by seven from fifty six to sixty three.

The Health and Human Resource Strategy includes goals to support entry level professional health education, as well as to support Yukoners to obtain professional health education.

To that end, our government has established additional nursing bursaries, medical education bursaries, health profession education bursaries, family physician incentive programs and increased the support provided to each recipient.

Of twelve nurses who have received bursaries to support their studies, seven have already returned to Yukon to work. This program builds self-reliant capacity in communities and strengthens community level access to health care.

The Department of Health and Social Services has also introduced a Nurse Mentorship Program. Experienced nurses are providing their expertise to other nurses in clinical settings. Community Nursing mentored seven nurses in 2006, an additional six in 2007 and Continuing Care is currently mentoring three.

Mr. Speaker our government has made major improvements and upgrading of Emergency Medical Services.

Paramedics are health care providers who work outside of the hospital or clinical environment to stabilize and transport patients with acute illness or injury. They are trained to perform emergency medical interventions in the absence of a doctor.

The redefinition of the paramedic role as health care providers has changed the focus of educational programs to include critical thinking, interpersonal communication, team leadership skills, and computer hardware and software skills. In order to match the newly established requirements by the Canadian Medical Association, Emergency Medical Service workers were required to undergo training to increase their skill set and the pre-requisites for future job postings had to be changed to reflect this new requirement.

About fifteen paramedics have now been trained to national standards and soon all paramedics will be at the highest national standard.

The Department of Health and Social Services has introduced other measures to improve the health of Yukoners. The Chronic Disease Management program is focusing on building on the success of the Yukon Diabetes Collaborative. The Collaborative is a group of health professionals who are helping patients manage diabetes and ensuring that patients receive the best possible diabetes care. Through education, training, and support, this program helps caregivers provide best practice care for patients with diabetes which improves health outcomes. Future work will include expanding this successful approach to enhance multi-disciplinary collaboration of health professionals with the goal of improving patient outcomes.

Education is important when it comes to healthy eating. A community dietician is working to educate parents and children about healthy eating. Initiatives include healthy living calendars, a healthy snack cupboard project, "drop the pop" campaign and specific campaigns targeted at the athletes participating in the Arctic Winter Games and Polar Games. Other initiatives include workshops, informational campaigns such as Nutrition Month and the establishment of school or community-based programs such as community gardens and kitchens.

Mr. Speaker, community mental health is another focus of attention. A mental health worker is based in Dawson City and counsels rural residents throughout the northern and western territory. She increases detection, assessment and treatment of rural Yukoners with mental health problems by providing direct service, education training and consulting with professionals, and promoting mental health in the general public.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is also active on the social side of the ledger. For example, $1.526 million is being provided under the Pioneer Utility Grant (PUG) to help seniors offset the cost of utilities. The current PUG rate is $890.28 and will increase to $911.65 in late September. The number of eligible recipients is also increasing.

During the 2006 election campaign, our government made Child Care funding a priority. Mr. Speaker, $6.3 million has been provided in this budget to meet our commitments.

This reflects the annual increase over five years previously announced that has already increased funding for childcare subsidies, increased the number of parents eligible for subsidies, and increases to childcare funding and family day home operators to increase wages.

Other enhancements will include training, more programming with an increased educational and cultural component, as well as more services to facilitate healthy family development programming for high-risk families through initiatives such as the Healthy Families Program.

Mr. Speaker, in November 2007, our government announced its intention to implement social assistance reforms, resulting from the most comprehensive review of social assistance since the program's inception.

The reform package includes a substantial increase to social assistance rates and an incentive package to encourage social assistance recipients to enter the workforce. We also announced new programming and support for persons with disabilities.

Because self governing First Nations and Canada also deliver social assistance and are directly impacted by the proposed changes, our government was required to undertake consultations with them.

That consultation has been completed and our government can now proceed with the proposed changes as planned. These changes are in addition to the previously announced increase to the Yukon Child Benefit for low income families and increases to the Child Care Subsidy program.

The major legislative initiative the Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken is the new *Child and Family Services Act*. This act addresses the legal frameworks that impact all children in the Yukon and there has been extensive consultation with the public and all groups that have an interest in children's legislation. Extensive involvement and discussion specifically with Yukon First Nations has resulted in new legislation that reflects a fresh approach to collaborative relationships.

The new legislation better defines a role for First Nations and the extended family in the care of their children and allows for greater involvement in the decisions that affect their children and families. The legislation reflects best practices in child protection, adoption and in supporting families to care for their children. This legislation better reflects First Nations cultural values and processes, such as recognizing custom adoptions. It will be tabled during this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, dealing with alcohol and drug abuse was a major commitment in our 2006 election platform and our government has continued to initiate measures under the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan.

One such initiative being undertaken by the Department of Justice is the Community Development Project. Funding of $142,000 is being provided in 2008-2009 to fund a Community Justice Coordinator that will work with communities to facilitate the development and planning in community meetings that identify the particular factors that contribute to substance abuse in their community.

The Community Wellness Court is another initiative established under the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan to provide court-monitored treatment for offenders with drug or alcohol addictions, symptoms of FASD or mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, $245,000 is being allocated in the 2008-2009 Budget to fund the Journey Far Carver Program that provides instruction in advanced carving and in marketing the product, paving the way for successful self-employment.

The program also provides training in work and life skills to address barriers such as substance abuse, family dysfunction and employability skills that participants may face.

Three Sundog wood carvers were invited to showcase their work in Ottawa on Yukon Day, February 10, 2008, as part of the Winterlude celebrations hosted by the National Capital Commission.

Mr. Speaker, two other key initiatives under the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan have been very successful, namely the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* (SCAN) and the RCMP Street Crime Reduction Team.

SCAN has received one hundred and thirty nine complaints respecting one hundred and eight properties since the office opened in late 2006, resulting in activity being voluntarily ceased at twenty locations, while an additional seventeen tenants were formally evicted. This legislation is assisting neighbourhoods to reclaim their streets from the hands of drug dealers and users.

The eight-person RCMP Street Crime Reduction Team has been equally successful resulting in one hundred and nineteen drug and alcohol charges being laid by late August of 2007.

Mr. Speaker, $5.592 million is being provided in the 2008-2009 Budget to continue work on the replacement for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. These funds will be used to advance this work including completion of schematic design and development of the implementation phase work plan. Site preparation will begin and some tenders will at that point be awarded.

While work on the new correctional facility is progressing the Department of Justice is also continuing to work on the implementation of its Correctional Redevelopment Strategic Plan. A new offender program model has been developed and will be implemented, as well as new programs for inmates.

The Department of Justice is striving to meet its goal of becoming the best corrections system in Canada.

Another major undertaking is the development of a new Yukon *Corrections Act* that is being modernized to support a correctional system that promotes healing, accountability and offenders taking responsibility. The consultation team is working with its partners from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Kaska to consult with Yukoners and give them a voice in creating the new *Corrections Act*. Consultations began in November 2007 and will continue until the fall of 2008 when it is planned to table the legislation in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The Department of Justice is working with two Yukon First Nations on two new initiatives that are being undertaken under the auspices of the Northern Strategy Fund.

The first involves the Kwanlin Dun First Nation conducting a Therapeutic Community Resource Feasibility Study. This project connects to the Correctional Redevelopment Strategic Plan, as well as to planning for the new correctional centre. Kwanlin Dun First Nation and our government will undertake a $150,000 study of which $100,000 will be spent during this fiscal year. This study will assess the feasibility of developing a land-based therapeutic camp as a resource to Whitehorse Correctional Centre clients and others.

The second Northern Strategy initiative involves the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Southern Lakes Justice Committee in undertaking a three-year pilot project to provide a solid research and policy development foundation on which to re-define the way in which justice is administered in Carcross. The project is being designed to provide the community with a blueprint for the administration of justice in Carcross that can be applied to other communities in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, funding for the total project over three years is $479,000 with $151,000 being allocated in 2008-2009.

The Executive Council Office, through the Youth Directorate, will be launching a public education awareness campaign aimed at youth and delaying the use of alcohol. This education campaign is one of several action items that was identified in the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan and is designed to reduce addictions in our communities. The goal of the campaign is to inform youth and their parents or guardians about the dangers and increased risk of addiction from drinking alcohol at an early age.

There are a number of ongoing funding initiatives for Yukon youth, through the Youth Directorate that will continue in the 2008-2009 fiscal year, namely:

- $200,000 for youth programs in communities funded through a contribution to Crime Prevention Yukon;
- $330,000 to fund three Whitehorse youth groups: Bringing Youth Towards Equality (BYTE), Youth of Today Society (YOTS), and the Whitehorse Boys and Girls Club;
- $25,000 to fund the francophone youth group "Comite Espoir Jeunesse"; and
- $102,000 for the Youth Investment Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Women's Directorate is to advance the social, legal and economic equality of women in the north. This year the Directorate is focused on aboriginal women's equality and increasing affordable housing options for single parents with children.

Mr. Speaker, to expand on the momentum of the National Aboriginal Women's Summit held in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland in June 2007, the Women's Directorate and the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues (YACWI) co-hosted two Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits at the Watson Lake Community Hall on November 16th and 17th, 2007 and in Whitehorse on November 22nd to 24th, 2007.

The goals of the summits were to communicate the outcomes of the National Aboriginal Women's Summit to Yukon aboriginal women, which was presented by Beverly Jacobs, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada; and to determine Yukon aboriginal women's priorities to further aboriginal women's equality in the north. These were historic summits, bringing together over 200 aboriginal women, Ministers and Chiefs for focused discussions on leadership development, wellness and education. The strongest message from the summits was a call for action. We are now strategically working in collaboration with CYFN and departments in Yukon government to determine next steps to advance aboriginal women's equality.

The Women's Directorate in conjunction with the Yukon Housing Corporation is undertaking a major new initiative to develop a housing complex of up to thirty units to address the primary needs of single parent families, particularly those of single mothers with children who make up the majority of the Yukon Housing waiting list.

Access to affordable housing helps to reduce the incidence of violence against women which is a key priority of our government and is a key factor in advancing women and girls' equality in the Yukon, as it contributes to the economic well-being of families and children.

With this initiative, we will be working to fill the largest gap in housing that currently exists – that being secure and affordable housing for single parent families in need and victims of violence.

The Yukon Housing Corporation has allocated $960,000 in the 2008–2009 Budget to proceed with this initiative.

The Women's Directorate, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, is undertaking another new initiative, a feasibility study for an emergency shelter for women in Whitehorse.

The study will provide options for an appropriate shelter model for homeless women, and will develop some key strategies for increasing our understanding of the scope of the issue in Yukon.

The feasibility study will take special consideration of the needs of aboriginal women through culturally-sensitive programming and design.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the governments' long term public education campaign on violence against women and children, the Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice will be releasing two educational videos with an accompanying training manual.

The educational videos are rooted in a rich Yukon context, speaking to the particular factors that influence the higher rates of violence against women and children in the North. This initiative builds upon work undertaken over the last three years to address violence against women and children, in partnership with seventeen organizations and departments who are known as Circles of Respect and Equality (CORE).

Mr. Speaker, our government established a Women's Equality Fund in 2007 in response to a need identified by a number of women's organizations for more sustained funding.

The Women's Directorate administers the $175,000 fund that provides three year funding for innovative, community-based projects.

The Women's Equality Fund has four objectives: supporting direct services and programs for women, advancing women's equality through research and policy development, supporting education and social action on women's equality issues, and supporting the development and capacity of women's organizations to effectively enhance women's equality.

To date, seven organizations have received funding under this new initiative: the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Les EssentiELLES, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Status of Women Council and the Yukon Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the Women's Directorate in partnership with the Departments of Justice and Health and Social Services is conducting a Yukon Women and Substance Abuse Research Project.

A survey was distributed to over three hundred Government of Yukon employees with the objective to help identify best practices in the treatment of girls and women with substance abuse problems, and analyze existing policies, programs and services to inform possible future improvements. In addition, the research project will assist in the identification of any training and development needs related to working with girls and women who may be experiencing substance abuse. The data gathered from the survey will inform recommendations and next steps on best practices in the area of women and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Housing Corporation has allocated $400,000 in 2007-2008 to construct three additional suites on the lower floor of the new Haines Junction seniors' housing building. Provision will also be made to provide a common area for seniors in the community to meet.

The Yukon Housing Corporation is providing $1.0 million in the 2008-2009 fiscal year for the 2007 flood relief initiative.

To date, 58 homeowners have applied for flood relief assistance. YHC anticipates the majority of repairs and upgrades will be undertaken in 2008-2009.

Mr. Speaker, $249,000 was allocated in 2007-2008 and a further $514,000 will be made available in 2008-2009 to enable the Yukon Housing Corporation to implement six new energy initiatives including grants and loans introduced in 2007.

Applications for YHCs' Home Repair program are up by twenty percent.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Community Services plays a key role in helping Yukoners achieve a better quality of life through the provision of improved community services and infrastructure.

In the fall 2007 sitting, the legislature approved amendments to the *Municipal Finance and Community Grants Act* that provide an increase in the Comprehensive Municipal Grant Funding in each of the next five years beginning April 1, 2008.

Comprehensive Municipal Grant contributions to Yukon communities will increase April 1, 2008 from $12.538 million to $13.346 million.

This represents an increase of $808,000 over the previous year allocation and will increase by this amount in each of the next four years.

By 2012, the Comprehensive Municipal Grant will have increased to $16.578 million.

As a consequence of the fall 2007 Community Tour, our government established a one-time rural infrastructure fund to meet immediate capital needs in rural Yukon communities.

The Department of Community Services has received proposals and priorities from rural communities to deal with municipal responsibilities such as potable water, wastewater, solid waste, and emergency management and response.

The fund has been distributed as follows:

- Faro - $229,000
- Haines Junction - $130,000
- Mayo - $100,000
- Watson Lake - $458,000
- Teslin - $100,000
- Unincorporated - $483,000

In total, the fund is $1.5 million, of which $250,000 was allocated in 2007-2008 with the balance of $1.25 million to be allocated in 2008-2009.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to strengthening municipal governance in the territory.

To this end, consultations are now occurring on proposed amendments to the *Municipal Act* that may:

- increase the term of office and period of disqualification for council members;
- allow councils to invest in securities rated in the highest rating category by one recognized security rating institution;
- strengthen municipal accounting procedures and permit municipal governments to offer cost-recovery programs;
- respond to concerns regarding the referendum process; and
- address other housekeeping amendments to improve administration of the legislation and municipal governance in Yukon.

The Department of Community Services, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services, has modernized the volunteer emergency response services in the Yukon.

These services now include volunteer emergency medical services, volunteer fire programs, volunteer emergency management services and volunteer search and rescue services.

In 2007-2008, four new primary care paramedics were hired to augment and relieve the strain on the volunteer emergency medical service in Dawson City and Watson Lake. There are also additional plans in place to hire more training and support staff to help all of our emergency response programs.

In 2008-2009, Community Services will review the feasibility of expanding the 911 service to more Yukon communities. We want to make the system easier to operate and more efficient for both the operators and the emergency responders.

Our government is also reviewing emergency response facilities in the communities and developing plans for improvements where required. Both Dawson City and Watson Lake need an improved ambulance facility, including offices and training rooms.

At the same time, Community Services is working on developing equipment standards for our Emergency Medical Services program. Ambulances that are about twenty years old are no longer adequate and have to be replaced with modern reliable equipment.

In the last five years, our government has added new fire trucks and ambulances to its fleet.

In the 2008-2009 Budget, provision is being made to purchase two new ambulances and one fire tanker for Yukon communities.

Moving Emergency Medical Services from Health and Social Services to Protective Services in the Department of Community Services late last year has created a good opportunity for integration of emergency response programs into one branch that now includes EMO, Wildland Fire, Structural Fire, Search and Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services.

"Supporting Sport and Recreation" is another platform commitment of our government that the Department of Community Services is mandated to carry out.

Community Services, Health and Social Services and the Public Health Agency of Canada have signed a two-year agreement to provide funding to the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon to promote and support program development in the areas of physical activity and healthy eating in all Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, $93,000 was spent in 2007-2008 for program delivery which included Active Yukon Schools, Rural Active Living Coordination, the World Record Walk in Communities, On the Right Path Walking Program, Healthy Workplaces and Active Script.

In 2008-2009, the program will have new components under the title "Health on the Move".

There is also a continuation of the Sport and Aboriginal Bilateral Agreement with Canadian Heritage and Sport and Recreation. This is a continuation of our governments sport bilateral initiative that ran from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007. The initiative will now continue to 2009-2010 with funding from Sport Canada for enhanced athlete and coaching development, professional coach salaries, rural travel assistance for sport and more support for our elite athletes. Mr. Speaker, our government is providing $417,000 annually in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, while Canada is contributing $262,000 annually for the period 2007-2008 to 2009-2010.

The Yukon will be sending its biggest team ever to the North American Indigenous Games this year with over 160 athletes, coaches and support staff to Cowichan, B.C..

The Games will be held from August 2nd to 10th with over 4,500 junior athletes, aged 19 and under, in attendance. Yukon will be participating in nine sports with over 50% of Team Yukon coming from the communities.

Mr. Speaker, "Promoting Arts and Culture" is an equally important platform commitment that promotes a better quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, according to recent Statistics Canada figures, Yukon enjoys the highest per capita funding for arts and culture in Canada at over $400 per person, and that, Mr. Speaker, demonstrates the value our government has for this important sector.

The Department of Tourism and Culture has been very effective in fulfilling this commitment.

Funding for Yukon museums, interpretive and First Nation cultural/heritage centres has increased from $546,000 in 2001-2002 to over $1.3 million in 2007-2008.

The Department of Tourism and Culture currently provides $963,000 in operations and maintenance funding support and $350,000 is available through capital programs.

This increase reflects the addition of nine cultural/heritage institutions, for a total of seventeen receiving funding support, along with funding support for existing museums.

In 2006-2007, $200,000 in additional capital funding was provided for the development of the Special Projects Capital Assistance Program to assist museums with specialized projects such as artifact inventory and cataloguing, museum joint marketing, and revenue generation projects.

In 2007-2008, in response to increased operations and maintenance expenses, $90,000 of capital funding was transferred making the total O&M increase $240,000.

Funding for the Yukon Arts Centre (YAC) is being increased by $75,000 for a total amount of $724,000 annually. This increase builds upon an additional $50,000 received from our government in 2005-2006.

The Yukon Arts Centre welcomed its new Executive Director, Al Cushing, on March 3rd, 2008 and our government looks forward to working with him and the Board of Directors on further developing and promoting the Yukon arts sector.

Mr. Speaker, the $568,000 increase in arts funding announced in 2007 supports three primary initiatives:

1. funding to sustain the operational requirements of established arts organizations and provide more access to funds by new and emerging artists and communities;
2. an enhancement of the Artists in the School Program; and
3. the establishment of a new Touring Artist Fund.

In addition, increased support to the Dawson City Arts Society will assist them with their operational requirements in their work for the advancement of the arts.

The Northern Strategy Fund is also being utilized to promote several interesting culturally important projects. For example, the Teslin Tlingit Council is receiving $144,000 to conduct a records diffusion project with access to records at Yukon Archives relating to community.

The project will utilize archived sources to document their stories and traditions as well as target records documenting their land claim settlement and self government agreements.

The project will include copies of records of all media including written documentation, film and sound recordings, photographs, maps, microfilm, electronic records and published materials.

Both our government and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government have accessed the Northern Strategy Fund to provide improved access to the Forty Mile Historic Site, allowing for its development as a major cultural heritage attraction in the North Klondike region.

The management plan for the site was cooperatively developed by both governments and was signed off by our government and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government at a ceremony at the site in 2006.

The Forty Mile historic site was created through the Final Land Claim Agreement. The site spans the mouth of the Forty Mile River where it enters the Yukon River north of Dawson City near the Alaska border.

The Han utilized the site as a caribou interception point and spring grayling camp. The site was also the location where the Han culture was first exposed to and changed by the full spectrum of European influences.

It was the first substantive non-aboriginal settlement in Yukon, associated with the shift in commercial interests from furs to gold, as well as the establishment of the visible authority of the Canadian Government.

Canadian sovereignty in Yukon enabled regulatory control over the Klondike Gold Rush and paved the way for the creation of Yukon as a distinct territory of Canada.

George Carmacks, Skookum Jim and Dawson Charlie all registered their discovery claims at Forty Mile.

Mr. Speaker, $175,000 is being allocated in 2008-2009 with a further $50,000 allocation in 2009-2010 to finance this project that will involve improvements to vehicular access from the Clinton Creek Road as well as improvements within this most significant Yukon historic site.

II. PROTECTING AND PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE

Mr. Speaker, protecting and preserving our environment is the second major pillar of our 2006 Election Platform.

The Climate Change Action Plan will set a clear direction for our government's response to climate change.

The Action Plan flows directly from the Yukon Climate Change Strategy, released in the fall of 2006, which committed our government to the development of an Action Plan within two years.

The Department of Environment is planning for wide participation in developing solutions so we can adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Yukoners will be given an opportunity to outline where they want to see actions being taken.

On February 12, 2008, over eighty delegates from around the territory and across the country attended a symposium to map out the next steps on how a Research Centre of Excellence might operate in Yukon.

The establishment of the research centre is a key component of our government's initiatives to adapt to the effects of climate change on the environment, communities and the people. The one-day symposium was the first major meeting at which representatives from universities, the Federal and Northern territories governments, the Yukon and First Nation governments and Yukon College could make recommendations on how to establish and operate the proposed centre.

Those from across the country who attended included representatives from Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia universities, federal, Nunavut and Northwest Territories departments, the Canadian Polar Commission, and the International Polar Year.

Mr. Speaker, on February 29th, 2008, our government renewed the Alaska-Yukon Intergovernmental Accord, which for the first time included climate change.

Following the signing of the Accord, the Yukon delegation met with the Alaska Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee that Governor Palin established last September to address preparation and implementation of an Alaska Climate Change Strategy.

There is a shared interest in working together on Climate Change adaptation issues that face both jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is allocating $153,000 in 2008-2009 to continue a three-year project with the Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Council to determine climate change impacts on the Yukon River.

Our government is also providing $200,000 in the 2008-2009 Budget to continue a five-year project to research and develop climate change adaptation for Yukon communities.

This initiative includes the participation of the International Polar Year, the Northern Climate Exchange, Ryerson University, the University of Victoria and the University of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, the Northern Strategy Fund through the Department of Economic Development is providing $755,900 to develop an investment-ready business plan and carry out early start projects demonstrating and marketing the Cold Climate Innovation Cluster concept.

The Department of Environment is continuing to pursue its fish, wildlife and habitat surveys. Sound decisions on land-use planning and development require up-to-date information on fish and wildlife populations and the availability of suitable habitat.

The Department of Environment expanded its inventory survey program last year with an allocation of $1.25 million and a further $505,000 will be added this year. New funding will allow for the collection of information on the status of Yukon's wildlife populations and habitat.

The preservation and protection of the Porcupine Caribou Herd remains of paramount concern to our government. We were unsuccessful last year in obtaining an updated modern count because of bad weather and the migration pattern of the herd. We will try again this year. At our recent meeting in Anchorage with Governor Palin, the State of Alaska expressed an interest in participating in our Harvest Management Strategy for the conservation and protection of the herd. Our government continues to provide $50,000 to the Vuntut Gwitchin government to support the lobby efforts related to ANWR and its impact on the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

The Department of Environment has also established a program to inform and educate residents and visitors on the steps they can take to make sure wildlife are not in conflict with recreational activities or property owners.

In keeping with commitments made under the Kwanlin Dun and Carcross Tagish First Nations' Final Agreements, our government has established a Southern Lakes Wildlife Committee. The committee is comprised of members from six First Nations, the Yukon government, the B.C. government and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The Department of Environment is maintaining its Parks Officer Program which has been successful in encouraging families to return to our campgrounds and day use areas to enjoy the Yukon's natural environment.

The Tombstone Visitor Reception Centre is being built. Construction started in July 2007 with the building framed and closed to the weather in November. Construction will be restarted in March with a completion date in July 2008. The Visitor Reception Centre will be a state of the art building with attention being given to minimizing the impact on its location. The building will serve as an economic catalyst to encourage visitors to travel in the area and stay longer in the region.

The Tombstone Visitor Reception Centre is an excellent example of collaboration between the Yukon government, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government and Holland America.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is allocating $428,000 in the 2008-2009 fiscal year to identify and assess environmental liabilities on fifty-five Yukon government properties that will ultimately lead to the remediation of contaminated sites on land administered by the Yukon government. This program was created in response to concerns raised by the Office of the Auditor General.

Our government is also committed to recycling. A successful pilot project through the Public Service Commission diverted thirty three tons of material from the landfill.

The Public Service Commission is allocating $75,000 to make the program permanent. The program employs people with disabilities through the PSC Workplace Diversity Employment Office working in partnership with Raven Recycling and the Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives program.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources delivers a broad range of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs through the Energy Solutions Centre including the Christmas light exchange, the Vehicle Emissions Clinic, the Appliance Rebate Program and district heating in Watson Lake.

III. PROMOTING A STRONG DIVERSIFIED PRIVATE-SECTOR ECONOMY

Mr. Speaker, mining and tourism remain the economic mainstays of the Yukon economy.

In a statement released by Statistics Canada on February 27, 2008 on intentions for private and public investment, capital spending intentions for 2008 show the Yukon with an expected 15.1% increase over the preliminary actual 2007 figures. There was a 13.2% increase in capital expenditures from the actual 2006 figure to the preliminary actual 2007 figure. The Yukon's anticipated 15.1% increase is the fourth highest in Canada in expected growth for 2008.

Total capital spending intentions in the Yukon for 2008 are $739.4 million. This is made up of $551.6 million in construction expenditures and $187.8 million in machinery and equipment expenditures.

While capital spending by the Yukon government is decreasing, capital spending in the private sector is increasing.

This is a very good sign for the development of the Yukon's private sector economy.

The value of exploration and mining activity in 2007 is expected to reach $140 million easily surpassing the banner year the territory enjoyed in 2006.

Yukon is number one in Canada in terms of percentage growth for total exploration expenditures.

In the past seven years, exploration activity levels in the Yukon have increased more than tenfold from $8 million in 2000 to the $140 million estimated figure for 2007.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as the manager of land and resources in the territory, is at the forefront of all this resource development.

Energy, Mines and Resources is currently completing consultations on the claims administration and royalty amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act* that are so important to the mining industry as well as amendments to the *Miners Lien Act*, in conjunction with Community Services.

The Yukon once again has an operating hard rock mine, Sherwood Copper's Minto mine.

The Minto mine is permitted and a new transmission line to supply power to the mine is under construction.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is allocating $329,000 in the 2008-2009 Budget to implement the new placer mining regime.

Placer mining has always been the economic backbone of the Yukon economy since the days of the Klondike Gold Rush.

The new placer mining regime will affect placer mining operations in the 2008 mining season and is designed to recognize the importance of a sustainable placer industry to the Yukon, and the importance of conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat.

Risk management decision-making and adaptive management are key components of the new regime which is science based and incorporates experience and traditional knowledge.

The existing Yukon Placer Authorization will be replaced by a set of separate watershed-based authorizations under the Fish Habitat Management regime for Yukon Placer Mining.

The Yukon Placer Secretariat will guide the implementation of the new placer regime.

The new regime will be phased in over several years, and a number of organizations and government agencies will play a significant role.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is also responsible for energy, oil and gas development, forestry, agriculture, land use planning and land disposition.

The Department is currently developing the Yukon's first comprehensive Energy Strategy. The Strategy will be developed in consultation with stakeholders, the public and other governments.

It will address energy production and supply in the Yukon, and will also address energy management, consumption and energy efficiency and conservation.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources held two oil and gas disposition rights processes in 2007 and issued oil and gas exploration rights in the Eagle Plains and Peel Plateau areas valued at over $22 million.

Our government, through the Department is also working hard to revitalize the forest industry with an emphasis on bio-mass energy production and modernizing Yukon's forest legislation.

Over the past two years, our government has been working closely with the Successor Resource Legislation Working Group to develop the framework of an appropriate forest management regime for stewardship of Yukon's forests.

The proposed regime has received input from the Forest Industry Focus Group and the Forest Values Focus Group.

Energy, Mines and Resources will be seeking input from the public on the proposed new *Forest Resources Act* with the closing date for comments at the end of April 2008.

The Department is also responsible for making agricultural land available and developed a fifteen lot planned agricultural subdivision ten kilometers east of Haines Junction. The first four lots were released by lottery in October with four more lots being released for sale early in spring 2008.

Our government has been working jointly with the Teslin Tlingit Council to develop recreational and rural residential land in the Teslin area.

A steering committee composed of land programs officials from both our governments has been actively working to identify opportunities for joint development in an effort to eliminate the demand for spot land applications in the area.

The steering committee is also overseeing a "Knowledge Transfer" Project that will convey information to other First Nations on opportunities for land development.

Energy, Mines and Resources is working with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the North Yukon Planning Commission and the Yukon Planning Council to develop an acceptable North Yukon Land Use Plan to be recommended to the Yukon and VGFN governments by March 31, 2008 with implementation possibly by the winter of 2008.

Our government, through Energy, Mines and Resources, is working with First Nations to fully involve them in the resource sector.

Examples include:

- ongoing support for the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition;
- successful collaboration with the Selkirk First Nation on the Minto mine development;
- working with First Nations in Teslin, Watson Lake, Ross River and Haines Junction to complete and implement Strategic Forest Management Plans; and
- working cooperatively through partnerships with First Nations to develop closure plans for the abandoned Type II mine sites such as Faro and Mt. Nansen.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is a major engine driving the future expansion of the Yukon economy.

Following the success of the National Marketing Campaign, our government invested $750,000 in an initiative entitled "Destination Yukon" designed to promote Yukon as a travel destination in key markets across southern Canada.

Destination Yukon is promoting Yukon through multi-media advertising, website use, and television advertising and is the single largest media buy since the Canada Winter Games.

Key target markets are Calgary, Edmonton, Greater Vancouver and the Greater Toronto area.

This marketing initiative is giving Yukon tourism industry partners the opportunity to maximize the benefits created by the National Marketing Campaign and prepare for future opportunities around the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver.

Destination Yukon is meant to increase awareness of Yukon as a travel destination of choice and direct visitors to the travelyukon.com website which showcases Yukon iconic features including the midnight sun and northern lights. The new travelyukon.com website gives consumers a one-stop-shop for finding tourism information online. The website is part of the $750,000 interactive strategy being implemented by the Department of Tourism and Culture. It is designed to convert visitor inquiries into customers for Yukon tourism operators.

The website's imagery has been customized to factor in a variety of travelers' profiles that have been categorized as Adventure Challengers, Scenic Outdoor Travelers and Cultural Explorers, all with different interests when planning a vacation.

The site includes links to tourism businesses, services and products which will allow Yukon tourism industry stakeholders and tour operators to expand their reach to outside audiences.

The economic arm of Association Franco-Yukonnaise will work in partnership with the Yukon government's French Language Services Directorate on the development of a full French language version of the website.

The Department of Tourism and Culture invests $5 million annually through a variety of programs and services to market tourism worldwide.

The Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund will have a continued investment of $500,000 to support Yukon's tourism operators with their own marketing efforts.

Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Tourism and Culture was in Berlin earlier this month from March 4th to 6th attending the world's largest tourism convention, International Tourism Bourse (ITB).

This tradeshow attracts more than 180,000 visitors and provided an excellent opportunity to meet and connect with tour operators, wholesalers, retail agents and air carrier representatives who are all critical to the continued growth of Yukon as a travel destination.

While in Berlin, the Minister of Tourism and Culture announced a unique marketing initiative in Europe where Yukon, in collaboration with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, under one banner entitled "Canada's North" focused attention on what Canada's North has to offer in terms of the variety of tourism product options available.

This pan-northern partnership was announced at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin with over two hundred representatives of the international travel trade industry and media in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, air access remains critical to the growth of Yukon's tourism industry.

European visitation to Yukon has been steadily growing with a 10% increase experienced in 2007.

Visitors to Yukon on the twice-weekly Condor flights in the summer months have also grown steadily with nearly 4,700 European visitors arriving last year.

In order to maintain and grow international visitation, a major expansion of the Whitehorse Air Terminal Building will be undertaken over the next year and a half.

The detailed design work for a two story Air Terminal Building expansion is underway and construction is expected to be completed by November 2009.

The 2,500 square-meter expansion will include additional space for security clearance of passengers and a new 230 passenger holding room that will serve as an in-transit lounge for international flights. The expansion will provide a new and larger carousel and an improved oversized freight and passenger elevator.

These improvements will allow the Whitehorse International Airport to continue to provide service to international traffic and to respond to the ongoing marketing efforts by the Department of Tourism and Culture to attract increased international traffic.

The Fulda Challenge Extreme Arctic Winter Adventure helps showcase the territory's beautiful scenery and memorable attractions in key overseas target markets.

The Yukon government's investment of $150,000 is used to partner with Fulda, a German tire manufacturer, to support broadcasts and print media participation.

This coverage throughout Europe generates $3.25 million Euros in estimated media-equivalency exposure for Yukon.

The Fulda Challenge is valued by private sector businesses throughout the territory. The tire company estimates it spent $1 million this year on equipment rentals, transportation, food and beverages, accommodation, staging of events and other services.

The Department of Tourism and Culture is currently discussing future partnerships with Fulda officials including a new Memorandum of Understanding between Fulda Reifen and Yukon Tourism to market and promote the Fulda Challenge.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that German speaking Europeans are Yukon's largest overseas market bringing close to 10,000 visitors to the territory each year and yielding approximately $8.5 million in spending.

Following the success of the pilot project for the use of the Old Fire Hall on the Whitehorse waterfront, our government will continue to partner with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Arts Centre to provide arts programming at this venue for 2008.

The further use of the Old Fire Hall as a cultural venue will complement other Whitehorse waterfront development initiatives.

These initiatives include the MacBride Museum expansion, trolley extension to Spook Creek, the refurbishment of the Round House and $18 million in Canada Strategic Infrastructure funds in support of identified projects by the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, the Ta'an Kwach'an Council and the Yukon government.

Mr. Speaker, the Carcross waterfront will also be receiving attention through the Destination Carcross initiative. Additional funding of $180,000 will be used to upgrade the Carcross Visitor Information Centre by moving the mechanical room into a new ground level addition and installing a new potable water system.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's highways and bridge infrastructure are key elements in promoting the Yukon's economy. The Department of Highways and Public works is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the territory's transportation and communications systems. The Shakwak Project has been of tremendous benefit to the territory. At the recent signing of the Alaska-Yukon Intergovernmental Accord in Anchorage on February 29, 2008, our government and the State of Alaska agreed to jointly lobby the Government of the United States with respect to an extension of the Shakwak Project which is due to expire in 2009.

Shakwak Project expenditures for this fiscal year include:

- $3 million for construction of the Slims River Bridge at km 1705. Design and permitting is currently in place for the construction of a new structure to replace the existing Slims River Bridge with actual construction being planned for 2009.
- $11 million for the reconstruction of the Duke River Bridge at km 1768. A detour bridge will be opened in the latter part of March to facilitate traffic while the Duke River Bridge is being reconstructed. Several contracts have already been tendered in relation to this project. Work has commenced on site and at the steel fabrication plant and is expected to be completed by September 30, 2008.
- $3 million for the removal and disposal of the existing Donjek Bridge. This is the second year of the removal project with $900,000 being spent in 2007-2008.
- $4 million for Shakwak reconstruction of the Alaska highway km 1700 to 1717 located along the south shore of Kluane Lake near Sheep Mountain. In 2007-2008, $10 million was allocated for grade construction and drainage improvement, sub-base and base course construction.
- $5.5 million for Shakwak pavement construction from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska. This is a continuation of the $6 million allocated in 2007-2008 for production and placement of hot mix asphalt on the Haines Road.
- $1 million for Shakwak BST application and re-vegetation from km 1700 to 1717. Seeding and fertilizing the areas disturbed by reconstruction are a standard part of road construction aimed at minimizing environmental impact.

Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that the funding for all of these Shakwak projects are 100 percent recoverable from the Government of the United States.

The Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund provides the Yukon government with 50 percent funding.

The deck replacement for the Lewes River Bridge at Marsh Lake is a CSIF project. Work began last year with the installation of a temporary work platform and the contractor will be back on-site by mid-April with work scheduled to be completed by the end of September 2008. The $2.4 million project will include the construction of a new bridge deck, new guard rail, replacement of bearings and minor structural strengthening.

Mr. Speaker, $850,000 is being allocated in 2008-2009 for the reconstruction of a short section of the North Klondike Highway at Flat Creek Hill, km 656 to 657.

Work is also progressing on the rehabilitation of the existing pavement on sections of the Klondike Highway.

The budget for 2007-2008 was $2 million for various pavement and overlay of km 204 to 212 of the Klondike Highway.

In 2008-2009, $1.5 million is being allocated for various locations to rehabilitate the existing pavement overlay and by recycling the pavement into base course and resurfacing with BST.

Mr. Speaker, the Campbell Highway is one of the Yukon's major resource roads providing access to this resource area.

Accordingly, our government is committed to providing $31 million for the improvement and upgrade of the southern portion of the Robert Campbell Highway over the next three years.

As a consequence of the anticipated increase in activity on the road, the Department of Highways and Public Works has made it a priority to upgrade this highway to maintainable standards.

For this fiscal year, $8.6 million is being allocated for Campbell Highway reconstruction between km 10 and 190.

Projects planned for 2008-2009 include reconstruction in the following locations:

- from km 12 to 17 (north of the airport);
- from km 31 to 32 (Tom Creek); and
- from km 107 to 114 (near Tuchitua).

The Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for airport infrastructure as well.

The major expansion of Whitehorse Air Terminal Building has already been referenced.

Phase III of the Whitehorse Airport parking lot improvements is continuing. The improved parking lot will provide 420 stalls for public parking and will also include the installation of automated parking controls, relocation of the DC-3 and the reconstruction of Otter-Burns Road and the Alaska Highway intersection.

These upgrades will allow safe and more efficient access to the airport with smoother traffic flows and better control of long term parking.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Highways and Public Works is also responsible for the mobile communications infrastructure across the territory. Equipment at six remote sites in the south-eastern Yukon will be replaced in 2008-2009 to ensure the ongoing provision of mobile communications for emergency responders and Yukon government users such as conservation officers and highway maintenance workers. An allocation of $1.696 million is being made to carry out this important work.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Economic Development, through its many programs and services, is playing a key role in the development and diversification of the Yukon's private sector economy.

Economic Development is continuing to work with private and public partners to enhance business, trade and investment opportunities in Asia.

On October 9th, 2007, Yukon Nevada Gold and Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Company Limited signed an agreement to form a new Canadian company that will explore and develop mineral resources in Yukon.

The joint venture will inject a minimum of $3 million into mineral exploration in the territory which will translate into jobs for Yukoners and opportunities for Yukon businesses.

On January 30th, 2008, the Consulate General of Japan in Vancouver invited our government to host members of the Japanese business community. The event was part of our ongoing efforts to attract new investment capital that supports the continued growth of the Yukon economy. The Japanese business community is interested in small business potential and investment opportunities in Yukon's mineral and tourism sectors.

On March 3rd, 2008, the Minister of Economic Development attended the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference (PDAC) in Toronto. This conference is one of the world's most recognized mineral development conferences hosting over 18,000 delegates and 950 exhibitors from around the world.

Our government participated in a variety of events at the PDAC conference including:

- hosting a breakfast meeting with key industry members to discuss current Yukon mineral investment processes and the streamlined regime;
- presenting information on Yukon's regulatory process at the Canada-China Mineral Investment Forum, hosted by Natural Resources Canada;
- presenting information about mining and mineral exploration properties, the government services available to businesses and the mineral potential in Yukon at a booth in the PDAC trade show;
- holding first-time and follow-up meetings with Asian mineral companies interested in pursuing investment opportunities in Yukon; and
- visiting with numerous Yukon based mineral companies also participating in PDAC 2008.

Mr. Speaker, all this hard work has paid off.

On March 5th, 2008, North American Tungsten Corporation (NTC) announced a $19.4 million investment by Hunan Nonferrous Metals Corporation of China in the Mactung tungsten project located 230 km northeast of Ross River along the Canol Road. The NTC chairman and CEO, Stephen Leahy recognized the Yukon government for being helpful in facilitating their company's introduction into the Chinese market.

The Department of Economic Development supported the efforts of Hunan Nonferrous Metals Corporation to identify Yukon investment opportunities. Representatives from the company visited Yukon last summer to see Yukon's mineral potential first hand.

Our government has developed an Investment Attraction Strategy to guide the development of a diversified private sector economy, while focusing on key areas of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Economic Development with an allocation of $200,000 in 2008-2009 is supporting the long-term development of Yukon's economy with funding for economic infrastructure. Projects like the Alaska-Canada Rail Link Pre-Feasibility Study and the Port Access Strategy Study will provide the objective and quantified information required to enable public and private investors to take a serious look at developing additional infrastructure in Yukon.

Economic Development, through its business funds and its Film and Sound Incentive Programs, has contributed to the continued growth and diversification of the business sector.

To date, the Department has approved the following amounts:

- Enterprise Trade Fund – 249 projects for a total amount of $1.668 million with a 2008-2009 capital allocation of $600,000;
- Regional Economic Development – 58 projects for a total of $1.149 million with a 2008-2009 capital allocation of $450,000;
- Strategic Industries Development Fund – 62 projects for a total of $3.592 million with a 2008-2009 capital allocation of $1.0 million; and
- Film and Sound Incentive Programs – 129 projects for a total of $1.669 million with a 2008-2009 capital allocation of $760,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Community Development Fund (CDF) continues to assist community groups to undertake projects that will help build Yukon's social and economic capacity utilizing community creativity and energy.

Maintaining the Community Development Fund is a 2006 platform commitment. The CDF improves community health and well being, helps to strengthen local economies by creating employment and improving infrastructure.

In 2008–2009, CDF has a budget allocation of $ 3.3 million.

The Yukon Film and Sound Commission continues to actively engage and support Yukon's film and sound industry.

A vision for the Yukon film industry has been developed in cooperation with the industry and outlines a strategy for moving forward to increase the number of indigenous film projects undertaken in Yukon, comprehensively market Yukon as a location with outside production companies, and capture additional production and post-production activity from those outside producers who choose Yukon as a shooting location.

Work is now underway to develop a similar shared vision with the Yukon's sound recording industry.

Mr. Speaker, one of our major 2006 election platform commitments was to make Yukon First Nations full partners in the economic development of the territory for the mutual benefit of all Yukoners.

With Yukon First Nations setting their economic priorities and playing an active role in the development of the Yukon economy, the Department of Economic Development provides valuable assistance to First Nations in a range of areas. The Department works to support First Nation business success from building capable institutions of governance and capacity development to opportunity identification and project selection.

IV. PRACTICING GOOD GOVERNMENT

Mr. Speaker, practicing good government is the fourth pillar of our 2006 election platform.

Practicing good government has many facets.

It involves training, developing, recruiting and retaining a representative, professional public service working within a safe and healthy workplace.

In our 2006 election platform, there is a section entitled "Putting Yukoners First" which includes the following commitments:

- continue to provide Yukoners with the first opportunity for employment and advancement within the public service;
- ensure Yukon teachers are considered first for employment, subject to special or exceptional circumstances; and
- give a hiring preference to Yukon post-secondary students for employment within the Yukon government.

The Public Service Commission, together with all departments, is working hard to meet these commitments.

There is a three year Recruitment Incentive Fund that began in 2007 to address recruitment for hard-to-recruit positions within the Yukon government.

The $400,000 program funding for 2008-2009, the second of a three year budget allocation will be used to:

- enhance existing recruitment capacities;
- build relationships with potential employees; and
- improve branding and marketing initiatives.

The Public Service Commission manages a range of health and safety programs under the Investing in Public Service framework.

Under the direction of the Corporate Health and Safety Leadership Committee, our government is proceeding with plans for a government-wide audit procedure as per the July 2007 Workers Compensation Health and Safety Board order that came out as a result of an investigation.

Our government remains committed to a safe and healthy workplace for all employees and $244,000 is being allocated in this fiscal year to carry out this important work.

The Representative Public Service Consultant in the Workplace Diversity Employment office manages the First Nation Training Corps (FNTC) program, works with departments and First Nation governments to provide technical advice, facilitate secondments between the Yukon government and First Nation governments and assist First Nation individuals through the staffing process.

In 2007, eighteen FNTC positions were filled with eight of the candidates completing their term. Three of the eight are employed by the Yukon government, one by a First Nation government, two by other employers, one is receiving further training in the Yukon government, and one has gone on to further education.

Mr. Speaker, GradCorps is an internship program that provides recent Yukon post-secondary graduates with work experience to help them improve their employment prospects.

GradCorps students must be Yukon residents, have graduated with a diploma or degree from a recognized post-secondary institution within the past two years, and have little or no previous work experience in their field of study.

There are currently over ten proposals from across government for the fourth intake which will take place in March.

Since 2005, there have been twenty-one GradCorps placements and nine of those were re-hired into positions in the Yukon government.

Our government is indeed fortunate to have such a highly skilled and dedicated, professional public service.

Mr. Speaker, practicing good government means meeting our government's obligations to Yukon's francophone community in the *Languages Act*.

The French Language Services Directorate (FLSD) has increased our government capacity to deliver French language services.

The Directorate has negotiated an increase of $400,000 in the Canada-Yukon agreement for French language services since 2005-2006.

The French Language Services Directorate is preparing the Yukon government French Language Services Plan for 2009-2014 including plans to improve French language services in two devolved programs: the Whitehorse General Hospital in 1993 and universal health programs in 1997.

The Directorate will negotiate with Canadian Heritage to ensure that the Yukon government has the funding necessary to deliver useful services to our French-speaking citizens for 2009-2014.

Mr. Speaker, the French Language Services Directorate is also involved with the Public Service Commission in the development of guidelines for staffing bilingual positions and for French language training for Yukon government employees. These guidelines will ensure equity and fairness for managers and employees as well as clear processes to follow when making decisions on bilingual staffing and French language training.

The French Language Services Directorate will work with departments to improve access to French content on the Yukon government's website particularly in developing a fully bilingual mirror site for travelyukon.com website, a first in Western Canada.

It should be noted that with all these initiatives, there is a full cost recovery from Canada.

Mr. Speaker, practicing good government involves the effective, efficient and timely administration of government programs, services and regulatory processes. In keeping with our platform commitment, the Yukon government, the Council of Yukon First Nations and Canada will be conducting the main phases of the Umbrella Final Agreement mandated review of the development assessment process in 2008-2009.

Aspects of this comprehensive review include the Act, the regulations, roles and responsibilities of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) and decision bodies as well as related processes.

This is an opportunity for the Yukon government to work with Canada, CYFN, the YESAB, First Nations, YESAA participants and the public to ensure the development assessment process is meeting the objectives set out in the Umbrella Final Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, our government's contribution to the Five Year Review of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act* (YESAA) is approximately $200,000.

Our government has been working closely with YESAB and project proponents to ensure major projects are efficiently and effectively assessed under YESAA.

Major development projects that have been reviewed include: the Carmacks-Stewart Transmission Line in 2007, the Carmacks Copper Mine in 2008 and the Dawson Wastewater Treatment System in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, under YESAA, industry and development proponents are required to consider socio-economic effects in their project proposals, which is often difficult to identify.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics, with support from the Executive Council Office's Development Assessment Branch, is developing a web portal application that will allow easy, one-stop access to the Yukon government's socio-economic information in a comprehensive and useable format for the proponents, assessors, decision bodies and regulators.

The Socio-Economic Web Portal is being funded through the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Targeted Investment Program and Natural Resources Canada's Geo-Connections Program.

Mr. Speaker, practicing good government from our government's perspective involves cooperative and collaborative governance.

We have made cooperative governance with other levels of government a hallmark of our administration that sets us apart from previous Yukon governments.

Our consultations with municipal governments on proposed amendments to the *Municipal Act* and the increase to the Comprehensive Municipal Grant are examples of cooperation at the municipal level.

Mr. Speaker, our 2006 election platform commits our government to work with Yukon First Nations to:

- promote cooperative governance based on mutual respect of each others' jurisdiction;

- utilize the Yukon Forum to implement such major initiatives as the Northern Strategy, the Targeted Investment Program, the Northern Housing Trust, the Children's Act Review, the Corrections Action Plan and Education Reform;
- re-establish the Intergovernmental Forum with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development;
- make First Nations full partners in the economic development of the territory for the mutual benefit of all Yukoners; and
- assist First Nation governments in capacity development.

Our government is acting on all of these commitments.

For example, our government established the Governance Liaison and Capacity Development Branch of the Executive Council Office in 2007.

This Branch is implementing capacity development strategies in cooperation with First Nations and supports activities to strengthen cooperative governance in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, $685,000 of the 2008-2009 Northern Strategy budget is being dedicated to support activities in the Governance Liaison and Capacity Development Branch.

During 2007, the following capacity development projects were approved under the Northern Strategy:

- $700,000 to expand the capacity of the Association of Yukon Communities to oversee training for elected officials and staff of municipal and First Nation governments that deliver municipal-type services;
- $150,000 to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation to provide training to develop community peace keepers, mediators and negotiators;
- $1.05 million to the Champagne Aishihik First Nation to develop Yukon First Nation executive leadership and management programming;
- $950,000 to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and Carcross-Tagish First Nation to assess First Nation capacity in the areas of land and resource development, develop strategies for improving capacity, and develop a long-term capacity strategy through education and training;
- $405,000 to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop and deliver training for members of Boards and Committees and other enhancements such as one-on-one consulting;
- $500,000 to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Champagne Aishihik First Nation to develop a comprehensive training, certification and capacity building program for water and wastewater system operators Yukon-wide;
- $2.012 million to the Selkirk First Nation to provide it with resources to strengthen governance structures in support of economic structures to support economic development; and

- $600,000 for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations to work cooperatively with Yukon First Nations to develop effective human resource initiatives and practices.

Mr. Speaker, in addition there are a number of on-going funding initiatives to Yukon First Nations that will continue in the 2008-2009 fiscal year including $100,000 for the Yukon Forum and $7.155 million in Land Claims Funding.

Mr. Speaker, on February 11th and 12th, Yukon First Nations and Yukon government delegates met with a number of senior Federal Ministers regarding the need to develop a timely and inclusive process for responding to issues identified in a tripartite report on the nine-year review of the implementation of the Yukon treaties. The review of the Yukon First Nation Final and Self Government Agreements, which have been in place for over ten years, was completed last year.

This was the first extensive review of the land claim agreements and the report highlights the need for the federal government to resolve inconsistencies in federal policies and to increase funding to ensure the spirit and intent of the agreements are fulfilled. The review itself was an excellent example of intergovernmental cooperation involving Canada, Yukon and First Nations in implementing the land claims agreements.

Mr. Speaker, our cooperative governance approach continues to extend to our two sister territories, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, our neighboring jurisdictions, Alaska, Alberta, and British Columbia, to other provincial jurisdictions through the Council of the Federation, and indeed to the Government of Canada.

As stated earlier, we signed a new Intergovernmental Accord with Governor Palin of Alaska on February 29, 2008 and we are looking forward to continuing our close working relationship with Premier Stelmach after his government's recent election.

Mr. Speaker, practicing good government involves strong fiscal management.

The Department of Finance has done a stellar job in negotiating a new principles-based Territorial Funding Formula that will promote long-term and sustained fiscal stability for the territory for the foreseeable future.

Finance has now successfully negotiated another major funding agreement with Canada.

Yukon and Canada have concluded negotiations on the Infrastructure Framework Agreement related to the Building Canada Plan.

The Building Canada Plan agreement runs from 2007-2008 through to March 31, 2015.

The Fund provides Yukon with $182.91 million from Canada for infrastructure initiatives. The Building Canada Plan stipulates that initiatives will be cost-shared on a 25 / 75 % basis.

Yukon's share is approximately $61 million bringing total infrastructure investment under the Building Canada Plan to just under $244 million.

CONCLUSION

In closing Mr. Speaker, the 2008-2009 budget is the second budget in our current five-year mandate.

This budget is our second installment in meeting the commitments outlined in our 2006 election platform, "Building Yukon's Future Together – A Clear Vision for a Bright Future".

It builds upon the good work of our 2007-2008 Budget as we progressively go about fulfilling the vision we offered Yukoners back in 2006.

Yukon's future prospects get brighter with each passing year.

Once again I would like to thank all the government officials who helped us prepare the 2008-2009 budget.

It is indeed the product of many hands and Mr. Speaker, I commend this budget to all members of the House for their consideration.